



Association of Washington Business

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Your statewide
business advocate

March 20, 2000

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
ATTN: Greg Graham
Walla Walla District
201 N. Third Ave
Walla Walla, WA 99362

Re: Lower Snake River Dams

Dear Sir:

The Association of Washington Business (AWB) is Washington's oldest and largest business and agriculture organization. Our 3,700 members, who encompass the entire spectrum of large and small private-sector companies across the state, employ more than 600,000 people. Our largest members include Boeing, Weyerhaeuser, ALCOA, Bank of America, SAFECO, Avista, *The News Tribune* newspaper (Tacoma), KXLY radio (Spokane), Fisher Companies, Hewlett-Packard, WaferTech and Microsoft, among others. AWB is also the voice of small business in our state, as 87% of our members employ fewer than 100 workers and one-third employ fewer than 10.

AWB also is Washington's State Chamber of Commerce. More than 70 local chambers affiliate directly with our Association, and we are also the umbrella organization for more than 120 trade and professional organizations, many of which are agriculture-related. When you factor in our association and chamber affiliates, AWB represents the interests of millions of employees across the state of Washington.

AWB is opposed to breaching the Lower Snake River dams. We believe that the barging of young salmon has shown the most promise toward restoring wild salmon runs, and that the innovations to turbines and spillways also is improving recovery rates.

The problem of dwindling salmon stocks cannot be placed solely at the foot of the dams. Predators, fishing pressure, habitat, ocean conditions and water quality all play a roll. Removing dams is premature at best. In fact, breaching the dams could unleash tons of silt that has accumulated behind the reservoirs, choking the river for years and turning the water into a murky, turbid soup.

In addition, breaching the dams would destroy the Snake River barge system, forcing increased traffic onto an already overburdened network of roads and rail lines in southeastern Washington. As you know, the roads in this part of the state are mostly two-lane highways which already are among the state's most dangerous.

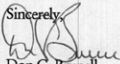
There also is the issue of what breaching the dams would mean to our power supply in the Pacific Northwest. Our members depend upon reliable, cost-effective hydro power. In fact, much of our high technology manufacturing sector demand large loads of high quality and reliable power. While many may believe it is just the aluminum and pulp and paper industry which demand 50 to 100 megawatt loads, companies like ASiMI and WaferTech also require large amounts of electrical energy.

Our organization is concerned that the future supply of electricity will be inadequate, even if the Lower Snake River dams produce to their capacity. We are alarmed by a recent Northwest Power Planning Council report which shows that, without new electrical generating capacity, the electrical energy shortage will grow more acute in the coming years. In fact, in the next four years there is a one in four chance that our region will suffer a brownout or a blackout during the peak demand winter months.

Finally, many of our agriculture members in southeastern Washington depend on irrigation water from the reservoirs behind the four dams. These dams are responsible for creating a highly diversified agriculture economy which allows our farmers to grow an abundance of different crops to better meet market demands. To simply say that our farmers and ranchers can revert back to dry land wheat farming ignores the reality of world markets demands.

Again, our Association is strongly opposed to the removal or breaching of these dams - or for that matter any of the dams on the Columbia and Snake River system. We encourage you and other federal agencies to continue your work on alternative ways to restore wild salmon runs. We realize the problem is extremely complicated and multi-faceted. Therefore, it seems to us that our solutions also should address an array of issues rather than the simplistic focus on dam removal.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Don C. Brunell
President

Cc: Governor Locke Rep. George Nethercutt
Rep. Norm Dicks Senator Slade Gorton
Senator Patty Murray Rep. Jennifer Dunn
Rep. Adam Smith Rep. Jack Metcalf
Rep. Richard "Doc" Hastings

Washington Legislative Leaders
Rep. Jim McDermott
Rep. Jay Inslee
Rep. Brian Baird